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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002809

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2013

TAGS: PREL KPAL KWBG IS TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA RESPONSE TO DEMARCHE ON ARAFAT CONTACTS

REF: STATE 106646

(u) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch, reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In absence of higher-ranking MFA officials, we delivered reftel demarche to Acting Head of Department for Middle East and Maghreb Tuzun. In response Tuzun said he is not aware of any current GOT plans to visit Arafat.

¶2. (C) Noting Turkey's strong support for President Bush's initiative, Tuzun underscored Turkey's good relations with both Palestinians and Israelis and readiness to contribute to a solution. After citing a Turkish-translation of a &Haaretz8 article quoting Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi saying she will meet Arafat despite Israeli objections, Tuzun then shared his personal view regarding Turkish relations with the Palestinians and Israelis. He stated that, since Arafat is the legally elected Palestinian chairman, it would not be proper not to visit him and it would be more useful to have direct talks with Arafat to express Turkish views. It would not be useful to put restrictions on dealing with the Palestinians at the beginning of the peace process. Tuzun re-emphasized these views are his own. We asked him to ensure U.S. views were considered at more senior levels.

PEARSON